

men to humour or flatter a vain woman, and Elizabeth nursed her prejudice against them with all the bitterness natural to one so spoiled by the fulsome flattery of her servitors. Moreover, it would be unfair to overlook the fact that her situation rendered it difficult for her, especially before the Armada had rallied an united nation round her throne, to yield to the demand for "a further reformation." A people, the majority of whom had been weaned from the Roman Church against its will, was not a people to fall straightway in love with a system so radically different from the old cult. Elizabeth could hardly be expected to enter Geneva when a majority of her subjects had only begun to move from Rome.

Even the moderate Puritans, not to speak of the more extreme sects, could not therefore hope to oust the historic hierarchy, though, to judge from the temper of the Commons, they had a large following in the nation. Their dogmatic demands were thus, to a certain extent, in the circumstances, visionary and provocative of persecution, and, considering their own intolerance, it is questionable whether freedom of opinion would have fared any better under their auspices than under those of a Whitgift. Their persecution by the High Commission was none the less a crime and a blunder, for the powers of the Commission, as wielded by Whitgift, were fatal to civil as well as religious liberty. As well abolish all the safeguards of the rights of Englishmen as invest a body of men with the power to ignore their liberties under the guise of an ecclesiastical inquisition. This inquisition, it might be argued, was legally established to maintain the queen's legal prerogative. Formally it might be so, but it was none the less, on that account, arbitrary in the exercise of its powers, and in practice the moderate Puritans do not seem to have seriously questioned the royal prerogative. Even sectaries like Barrow, when challenged by Whitgift, professed the belief that "the queen was supreme governor of the Church, but might not make laws other than Christ had left in His word," and he might have added that it was not permissible to make or enforce laws contrary to the fundamental rights reserved to every Englishman by statute. They protested against the arbitrary exercise of the royal prerogative by the High Com-